Layton to lead York's climate initiatives

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After more than a decade at city hall, Mike Layton is taking a job outside of politics.

York University is set to announce Tuesday that the popular former councillor will lead the school's climate change initiatives as its first chief sustainability officer.

Layton spent his three terms on council championing green causes like bike lanes and the city's net zero targets, and says the new role is "a continuation of the work that I was most proud of at city hall."

"York has accomplished a lot in this file. They have a very aggressive agenda, and I want to help them achieve it," said Layton, who graduated from York in 2006 with a master's degree in environmental studies.

As the head of the university's sustainability office, Layton will be responsible for not only ensuring that the school's day-to-day operations are environmentally friendly, but that its academic programs and research contribute to fighting climate change.

He'll be tasked with leading the development of York's new sustainability strategy and helping oversee a $1-million fund that will steer money to innovative climate action projects.

York president and vice-chancellor Rhonda Lenton said the school conducted a global search to fill the job, and determined Layton is the right person to "take our commitment to sustainability to the next level."

"He'll be working across all the divisions and thinking about how we're going to continue to advance our commitment to sustainability, and really build our capacity to implement bold actions and bold initiatives that are going to make a difference," she said.

Layton's appointment is effective immediately.

The son of former federal NDP leader Jack Layton, the younger Layton was first elected to council in 2010, and over the next decade became one of its strongest progressive voices. The former University-Rosedale representative, now 42, announced last July he wouldn't seek re-election for a fourth term, saying he wanted to spend time with his family and find a new job focused on fighting climate change.

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